



County of Santa Clara



Vector Control District

A Division of
Environmental Resources Agency
Department of Environmental
Health

The Santa Clara County Vector Control District received confirmation yesterday that a dead bird found in San Jose tested positive for West Nile Virus (WNV). This is the first confirmation of the presence of WNV in Santa Clara County. There have been no human cases or mosquitoes found with the virus in Santa Clara County or surrounding counties to date.

"Santa Clara County Vector Control has fully engaged all of its staff to address the West Nile virus threat in Santa Clara County", said Tim Mulligan, Manager of the Santa Clara County Vector Control District. "District staff has collaborated with other city and government agencies to ensure this early West Nile virus detection in the County of Santa Clara. The District has substantially increased its surveillance and control activities to combat West Nile virus."

West Nile Virus is one of a group of disease-causing viruses spread by mosquitoes. West Nile Virus first appeared in the United States in 1999. WNV is transmitted to humans and animals through the bite of an infected mosquito and cannot be spread person to person.

"By protecting yourself against mosquitoes and mosquito bites, you can protect yourself against West Nile Virus," stated Dr. Sara Cody, Assistant Health Officer. "It's important to remember, most people bitten by mosquitoes won't become infected and most healthy people who get infected won't get sick. Most of those who do become sick only get a fever and rash. But for the vast majority, West Nile Virus won't be dangerous."

Horses are very susceptible to WNV. In Southern California, 26 cases of WNV in horses have been reported. A vaccine for horses is available and horse owners are advised to contact their veterinarians to have their horses vaccinated.

The Vector Control District is asking Santa Clara County residents to call if they find birds that have been dead for less than 24 hours and do not appear to have died as a result of an injury from cats, dogs, cars, etc. The Dead Bird Hot Line number is 877-968-2473.

Mosquitoes become infected with WNV when they feed on infected birds. Most people who are bitten by a mosquito with WNV will not get sick. People who do become ill may experience mild to moderate flu-like symptoms like fever, headache and body ache. It is estimated that less than 1% of the people who are infected with WNV become severely ill and require hospitalization. The elderly and immunocompromised are particularly susceptible to illness caused by WNV.

The Vector Control District collects adult mosquitoes weekly throughout the County and sends them to the State for testing. No infected mosquitoes have been found in Santa Clara County or in surrounding Counties to date.

To reduce the risk of being bitten by mosquitoes or contracting WNV, Santa Clara County residents are urged to take the following precautions:

- Eliminate all sources of standing water that can support mosquito breeding
- Avoid spending time outside when mosquitoes are most active, especially at dawn and the first two hours after sunset
- When outdoors, wear long pants and long-sleeved shirts
- Apply insect repellent, such as DEET, according to label instructions
- Make sure that doors and windows have tight-fitting screens. Repair or replace screens that have tears or holes.
- Contact the Vector Control District if you are being bothered by mosquitoes or know of a potential mosquito breeding source.

“While West Nile Virus represents a potential health threat, there is plenty that individuals can do to reduce the likelihood of infection,” said Acting County Executive Gary Graves. “Information is the best weapon to prevent the spread of this disease.”

Today, the State reported four more human cases of WNV in the Southern California area, bring the total of human cases in CA to 32.